

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 04995 181400Z

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ACTION AID-05

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3957

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4995

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB LE XF

SUBJECT: AAFLI ACTIVITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

1. DURING THE PAST YEAR,THE ASIAN-AMERICAN FREE LABOR INSTITUTE (AAFLI) OF THE AFLC/CIO HAS ESTABLISHED A FRIENDLY AND CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH LEADERS OF ORGANIZED LABOR IN LEBANON. THE RELATIONSHIP HAS GROWN OUT OF FREQUENT VISITS BY AAFLI REPS, A TIMELY IMPACT PRESENTATION OF MEDICINES TO A UNION-RUN HEALTH CLINIC, SCHOLARSHIPS TO THE HARVARD TRADE UNION SEMINAR FOR TWO LEBANESE LABOR LEADERS AND, MOST RECENTLY, PLANS TO HOLD A JOINTLY-SPONSORED TRAINING SEMINAR FOR LEBANESE TRADE UNION OFFICERS.

2. I HAVE CLOSELY FOLLOWED AND BEEN GRATIFIED BY THIS EVOLUTION, NOT ONLY BECAUSE LEBANESE LABOR IS BECOMING A SIGNIFICANT DOMESTIC POLITICAL FACTOR IN ITS OWN RIGHT, BUT ALSO, AND ESPECIALLY, BECAUSE ITS LEADERS HAVE SHOWN A HISTORICAL DISPOSITION TO PLAY A RESPONSIBLE AND MODERATING ROLE IN ARAB LABOR CIRCLES. THE LEBANESE THUS HAVE POTENTIAL TO ENCOURAGE OTHER ARAB LABOR MOVEMENTS TO DEVELOP TIES WITH AMERICAN LABOR AND EVEN, UNDER ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES, TO TAKE DISCREET ACTION TO COUNTER ANTI-AMERICAN MOVES, SUCH AS THE ATTEMPT BY SOME GROUPS TO ORGANIZE AN ARAB LABOR BOYCOTT OF US INTERESTS DURING THE OCTOBER 1973 WAR.

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 04995 181400Z

3. IN MY VIEW, HOWEVER, AAFLI'S VERY SUCCESS IN
LEBANON PLACES IT AT A CROSSROADS POSITION. TO EXPAND ON
AND EXPLOIT THE RELATIONSHIP IT HAS ACHIEVED WITH THE LEBANESE
AS WELL AS TO BE ABLE TO RESPOND TO OTHER OPPORUTINIES IN THE
REGION, AAFLI MUST GO BEYOND ITS PRESENT PRACTICE OF
DESPATCHING REPS ON PERIODIC VISITS FROM WASHINGTON. IN
LIGHT OF ITS GROWING ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS OUT HERE,
AAFLI MUST MOVE AHEAD AT THIS TIME AND ESTABLISH A FULL-
TIME PRESENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. I UNDERSTAND THAT AAFLI
AND AID ARE CURRENTLY NEGOTIAITING THE FUNDING OF AAFLI'S
REGIONAL ACTIVITIES AND THEREFORE OUGHT TO RECORD MY SUPPORT

OF EMBASSY AMMAN'S RECENT RECOMMENDATION
(AMMAN 1389 AND 1696) THAT AN AAFLI REP WITH REGIONAL
RESPONSIBILITIES BE ASSIGNED IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE TO
AMMAN.
GODLEY

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